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15% water rate hike proposed

Rates would jump another 44% over four years starting in 2018/19

- **Similar increases proposed for sewer rates as well**
- **Public hearing to be held in January**
- **If more than 50% of 'affected parcels' submit written protests, rate increases cannot move forward**

By Granville Fox
Tribune Reporter

Calistoga residents could see their water and wastewater rates increase by as much as 15 percent starting next March if the hikes recommended by an outside consultant and local subcommittee are adopted by the City Council.

Before it takes that step, however, the council will schedule a public hearing and notify water customers 45 days prior so that they may read

the proposal and submit comments or suggestions about the new rate structure.

Members of the council were less than thrilled about moving forward with the recommended rate increases but they acknowledged that they have little choice.

"None of us are enthusiastic about this as you can see, but it is the necessary step," mayor Chris Canning said.

The changes are needed because neither the water or sewage charges

generate enough revenue to cover the costs of providing the services, including operation and maintenance of the water and wastewater facilities.

On top of that, the city must continue to pay existing debt service obligations, as well as fund replacement of aging water systems infrastructure and mandated improvements required under a 2016 state Cease and Desist order.

Consultant Bartle Wells Associates, who presented its rate

study report to the council on Tuesday, also said the city's current tiered rate structure could be considered illegal based on a recent court ruling over the city of San Juan Capistrano's tiered system.

In that case, a judge found that rates must reflect the cost of service, not usage, BWA president Douglas Dove told the council.

"You can do tiers if you can justify them, but we couldn't come up

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School district, employees reach contract agreement

By Kim Beltran
Tribune Editor

Calistoga Joint Unified School District non-teaching employees, including management, will receive a two percent salary increase this year and next under terms of a new contract approved this week by board of education trustees.

The three-year collective bargaining agreement calls for members of the California School Employees Association (CSEA) to also receive a wage boost in the 2019-20 school year equal to that negotiated by the local teachers' union. The Calistoga Associated Teachers have not yet negotiated a new contract.

CSEA members are known as "classified" workers – as opposed to "certificated" teachers – and include everyone from instructional aides and bus drivers to school

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PHOTO BY CLARK JAMES MISHLER



A shot in the arm

Above, Sean O'Neill receives a flu vaccine injection from Pacific Union College student Tristan Brandmeyer Wednesday afternoon during a Napa County Health Department free flu shot clinic in the Tubbs Building at the Napa County Fairgrounds in Calistoga. At left, public health nurse Debra Price prepares to administer a vaccine during the clinic, her last, she noted, as she plans to retire in five weeks. The public health department is hosting three more free shot clinics: Monday, Nov. 13, in American Canyon; Wednesday, Nov. 15, at St. Helena Elementary School from 3 to 6 p.m., and Monday, Dec. 4, at the Berryessa Senior Center, 4380 Spanish Flat Loop Road, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Council extends emergency due to fire fallout

By Granville Fox
Tribune Reporter

Fearing possible damage to the city's public water system from excessive erosion in the wake of the Tubbs Fire, the City Council on Tuesday voted to keep in place a local emergency declaration adopted last month.

With some 2,000 acres of charred land within the Napa River Watershed that flows into the city's water reservoir, council members are worried about recouping potential cleanup and repair costs should winter rains bring a deluge of soil and debris into the system.

"Now the threat has really shifted from being a fire threat to an erosion control and water runoff threat," city manager Dylan Feik said Tuesday night.

A report from the Watershed Emergency Response Team, put in place to assess the risk to public health from fire-related environmental issues, predicts a 10-12 percent increase in soil erosion

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PHOTO BY ANNE HOUGHTON

Things are looking brighter for Calistoga businesses a month after wildfires clogged the Napa Valley with smoke and forced mass evacuations, including the entire town of Calistoga. Although we originally gave credit for this cheery photo to mayor Chris Canning, it was actually taken by Calistoga Anne Houghton on Oct. 19.

City, businesses still assessing economic losses due to wildfires

By Kim Beltran & Granville Fox
Tribune Staff

A month after a series of devastating wildfires brought routine daily life – and the Napa Valley's economic engine – to a standstill, Calistoga business owners and employees are still feeling the pinch of that shutdown on their pocketbooks.

This week, with both auto and pedestrian traffic on Lincoln Avenue noticeably heavier, several retailers reported an uptick in the number of out-of-town visitors and expressed a sense of optimism that business is on the upswing.

Clive Richardson, co-owner of Calistoga Roastery, estimated that in the immediate wake of the fires and a complete evacuation of the town, sales at his coffee shop were down 70 percent during the week and 60 percent on weekends. To combat this dip in clientele, Richardson shortened his hours but noted he was sure the alteration would be brief because "there's a general sense that business will come back," he said.

Many local and area businesses have been offering promotions and deep discounts as a way

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